



## Report of Findings

Case Number: 2018-04511

[REDACTED]

County Pronounced: Taos

Law Enforcement: TCSO

Agent: Sheriff Jerry Hogrefe

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Pronounced Date/Time: 8/6/2018 1:30:00 PM

Central Office Investigator: John Thies

Deputy Field Investigator: Stephenson, Tamara

### CAUSE OF DEATH

Undetermined

### MANNER OF DEATH

Undetermined

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### Hannah Kastenbaum MD

Medical Investigator, Director of UNMH Autopsy  
Service, Assistant Professor of Pathology

All signatures authenticated electronically

Date: 7/24/2019 3:11:00 PM

Case Number: 2018-04511

Summary Opinion

Medical Investigator

Hannah Kastenbaum MD

Medical Investigator Trainee

**SUMMARY AND OPINION****PATHOLOGIC DIAGNOSES**

- I. Small male child with diffuse mummification and putrefaction of the internal organs
  - A. No injuries identified externally or internally
  - B. Organs anatomically normal in location and development
  - C. Postmortem liquefaction of brain with no obvious intra- or extraparenchymal hemorrhage

**SUMMARY & OPINION:**

This 4 year old male, [REDACTED], died of undetermined causes.

According to reports and medical records, [REDACTED] had a history of seizure disorder due to hypoxic ischemic injury of the brain due to meconium aspiration at delivery. Around early December of 2017, [REDACTED] was reportedly abducted by his father from his mother's custody in Georgia and taken to a compound near Taos, NM. On August 3, 2018, the Taos County Sheriff's Office served a warrant to the compound and found 5 adults and 11 malnourished children. Law enforcement described squalid conditions and no food or fresh water. They returned to the compound on August 6 and found in a tunnel the mummified remains of a child who was later identified as [REDACTED] by comparison of antemortem and postmortem radiology studies.

Autopsy revealed the mummified remains of a young male child wrapped in fabric and plastic sheeting. Besides decomposition changes, organs appeared grossly unremarkable. Microscopic examination was not otherwise contributory. Review of radiographs and CT images by Dr. Gary Mlady at the University of New Mexico Hospital revealed no injuries, skeletal maturity about appropriate for the reported chronological age, and many recent growth arrest lines. This latter finding was also described by anthropologist Dr. Heather Edgar (see separate report). Dental age assessment (see separate report) was also compatible with reported age.

Toxicology studies for an expanded array of illicit and prescription drugs and specifically for benzodiazepines were performed on liver tissue. No blood was obtained due to decomposed state of the remains. Only caffeine and a byproduct of decomposition were identified. Discussion with a toxicologist from NMS Laboratories confirmed that no levetiracetam (Keppra) or benzodiazepines (both medications reportedly prescribed to [REDACTED] to prevent his seizures) were detected in the sample. This could reflect a true negative, or true absence of the substances, or presence of the substances below the lower limit of detection of the test. There is no way to differentiate between these two situations.

There was no evidence in the autopsy or imaging studies of trauma. Due to limitations of autopsy, histology, and toxicology in decomposed remains, however, a cause of death could not be determined. Possibilities include, but are not limited to, infection, dehydration, starvation, the underlying seizure disorder, or toxicity of an undetected medication or substance.

As such, the manner of death is undetermined.

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**Case Notes for Case 2018-04511**

The body is OFF of exam hold. This morning I obtained a portion of the right femur, from approximately the proximal diaphysis to include the distal epiphysis in case future laboratory testing is requested. The next step is anthro processing. The specimen is to be retained indefinitely.  
8/17/2018 Nancy Mance Grief

**Note**

Grief Services rec'd call from Carla Romero, NM FBI Victim Specialist, working with dec. family. Questioning process of need for both parents to agree to disposition of body. I advised that Jennifer in Investigations could answer such questions but that family would also receive information from FH once selected, sometimes family might find it necessary to subpoena courts for permissions for disposition. Ms. Romero stated mother wants the body of the child returned to her (not cremated) and I indicated that a FH in Albuquerque area would still need to be selected as well as a FH in Atlanta, if this is the case. Ms. Romero asked about viewing and I indicated that would be unlikely due to the state of the body.

8/20/2018 John Thies Investigations

**Note**

Hold removed, dec can go with mother per E. Gonzales/Yvonne Villalobos.

8/20/2018 Hannah Kastenbaum Pathology

**Note**

Email inquiry for toxicology and COD from Taos County Sherrif Jerry Hogrefe forwarded to me by Yvonne Villalobos. Replied to state that testing was ordered on tissue but that it was still pending. An NMS Expanded panel does include diazepam and levetiracetam (Keppra), which the Sherrif stated [REDACTED] was prescribed for seizures.

Contact info from e-mail: jerry.hogrefe@taoscounty.org

Sheriff Jerry Hogrefe  
575 737-6480  
Taos County Sheriff's Office  
599 Lovato Pl  
Taos, NM 87571  
8/23/2018

Yvonne Gomez Investigations

**Note**

Received medical records from Grady Hospital, Georgia. Records transferred to MR drive.

8/27/2018 Hannah Kastenbaum Pathology

**Note**

Received following in e-mail from Sheriff Jerry Hogrefe re: investigation into circumstances/conditions in compound:

"No food, no fresh water, horrid, filthy, hazardous living conditions wre found on 8-3-18. We now firmly believe he died on 12-24-17 by writing in a journal. I believe the cause of his death is that he was denied his medication to prevent seizures – which is why I am anxious for the tox screen."

9/4/2018 John Thies Investigations

**Note**

sent subpoena to Childrens Hospital Atlanta redquesting MR's.

9/11/2018 Jordan Sousa Morphology

**Note**

All evidence has been packaged.

9/21/2018 Hannah Kastenbaum Pathology

**Note**

Reached out to NMS laboratories to discuss initial toxicology results on liver. Received a call back from Dr. Dan Isenschmid who advised that both levetiracetam and diazepam are included in the liver analysis ordered and they have seen both drugs in these kinds of tissue samples in other cases. Negative result could represent true negative (no drug in sample) or drug level below the limit of detection. He suggested following up with directed analysis for the two drugs; the directed tests sometimes have a lower limit of detection. He confirmed that directed analysis for benzodiazepines in tissue could be added on to the current specimen by calling client services and requesting 9329ti. He will then add on directed analysis for levetiracetam. He thinks, given that they hold specimens for 6 weeks, they should still have liver tissue left over, but advised to ask client services. If no liver is available, he suggested brain as next sample.

9/21/2018 Hannah Kastenbaum Pathology

**Note**

Had telephonic conference with Taos DAs John Lovelace and Tim Hasson. Discussed that they need someone to testify to decedent's identification. Described Cert of ID form and that ID was done by Dr. Mlady. They asked about determining how long he had been dead, if there were any chemicals ingested that might cause death, state of his remains, etc. Explained that tox testing was still in process and does not exclude ALL compounds.

They want me to come to Taos next week (Thurs Sept 27) to testify for Grand Jury. Will pass along their contact info to Paul Carbajal for scheduling. Paul will also give them instructions to contact records for a copy of the Certificate of ID.

9/27/2018 Alexandra Garley Investigations

**Note**

18-4511

**Hannah A Kastenbaum**

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**From:** Gary Mlady  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 07, 2018 9:30 AM  
**To:** Hannah A Kastenbaum  
**Subject:** RE: \*secure\* OMI CT review

No evidence of skeletal injury that I can see.

Gary Mlady, MD  
Chair, Department of Radiology  
*University of New Mexico*  
(505) 272-0011; Fax (505) 272-5821

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**From:** Hannah A Kastenbaum  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 07, 2018 9:16 AM  
**To:** Gary Mlady <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** \*secure\* OMI CT review

Dr. Mlady-

Will you please review the CT on 2018-04511, [REDACTED] is a 4 year old male with a history of developmental delay, seizure disorder, and being wheelchair-bound who was abducted by one parent in Georgia in December and whose decomposing remains were located in the semi-underground bunker raided by law enforcement recently outside of Taos. He is significantly decomposed, so I'm not sure how much I'll be able to tell by autopsy. Any evidence of injuries by CT?

Thank you.

H

Hannah A. Kastenbaum, MD  
Medical Investigator  
New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator  
Assistant Professor of Pathology  
Director of the UNMH Autopsy Service  
University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center  
MSC07 4040  
1 University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001  
505-272-3053

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## Hannah A Kastenbaum

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**From:** Gary Mlady  
**Sent:** Friday, August 10, 2018 9:33 AM  
**To:** Heather Joy Hecht Edgar; Hannah A Kastenbaum  
**Subject:** RE: 2018-04511

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Can't comment on lucency and density since there is decomp air in the bones as well as overlying air of the soft tissues. Many growth arrest lines particularly most recently. Epiphyses look ok. Expected ossification at elbow for age. Might consider left hand xray for bone age.

Gary Mlady, MD  
Chair, Department of Radiology  
*University of New Mexico*  
(505) 272-0011; Fax (505) 272-5821

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**From:** Heather Joy Hecht Edgar <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 09, 2018 2:30 PM  
**To:** Gary Mlady <[REDACTED]>; Hannah A Kastenbaum <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** 2018-04511

Dear Dr. Mlady,

I'm working with Dr. Kastenbaum on case 2018-04511. She told me you had previously examined the CT scans for fractures and found none. I asked Kethery to take some x-rays of the long bones to look for Harris lines or other evidence of growth disturbance. I'm not a radiologist, but to me the x-rays show not only Harris lines, but also some other unusual features, like areas of flocculation, densification and lucency, and perhaps reduced sizes of epiphyses. I'm hoping you might take a look at these x-rays and see if you think the bone structure reflects anything unusual.

Let me know if you want to chat or need more information. Thanks in advance for your opinion.

Best,

Heather J.H. Edgar, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Anthropology  
Forensic Anthropologist, Office of the Medical Investigator  
University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque NM 87131

PH: 505.925.4373

President, Dental Anthropology Association

"You are never wrong to do the right thing". Mark Twain

Sheriff Jerry Hogrefe  
575 737-6480

On Aug 21, 2018, at 8:42 AM, Hannah A Kastenbaum <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Sheriff Hogrefe-

Toxicology testing for Abdul-ghani is still in process. Because of the state of his remains, I was only able to obtain tissue, rather than blood. The panel ordered does include diazepam and levetiracetam (Keppra).

As this testing is still pending, there is no cause of death yet. I will be happy to let you know when there is more information.

HK

Hannah A. Kastenbaum, MD  
Medical Investigator  
New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator  
Assistant Professor of Pathology  
Director of the UNMH Autopsy Service  
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**From:** Yvonne A. Villalobos  
**Sent:** Friday, August 17, 2018 8:55 AM  
**To:** Hannah A Kastenbaum <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** FW: AG Wahhaj

FYI-

**From:** Yvonne A. Villalobos  
**Sent:** Friday, August 17, 2018 8:54 AM  
**To:** 'Jerry Hogrefe' <[REDACTED]>; Amy J Wyman <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** RE: AG Wahhaj

Good morning, Dr. Kastenbaum is out of the office until Monday. At this point we do not have this information. I will pass your contact information over to her.  
Yvonne



## Hannah A Kastenbaum

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**From:** Anderson, William <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 14, 2018 5:12 PM  
**To:** Hannah A Kastenbaum  
**Subject:** RE: case question

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

[[-- External - this message has been sent from outside the University --]]

Hannah,

I found this email in a completed file, but I could not find my response to you. I hope I sent it, but if not, my sincere apologies.

I reexamined the data for this case. There is no hint of the drugs mentioned in the data. However, with this type of sample it is always possible that the drugs are not recoverable or they may have deteriorated over time. I would be reluctant to say there was not any at the time of death. Of course, the dose would also play a role in detectability. Tissues, by necessity, must be homogenized prior to testing and are generally at 4X the reporting limit of the blood.

Again, I am sorry if I did not respond in a timely fashion. It was not deliberate. If I did, I hope this is the same response.

Bill



William Anderson, Ph.D., F-ABFT

Toxicologist III

(p) 215.366.1351

[www.nmslabs.com](http://www.nmslabs.com)



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**From:** Hannah A Kastenbaum [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 30, 2018 12:22 PM  
**To:** Anderson, William <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** case question

Bill—

Question about a recent tox case I went to NMS, work order 18231798.

This was liver tissue from the mummified remains three year-old boy found buried on a compound near Taos, NM (has been all over the national news).

Law enforcement is particularly concerned about whether or not Abdul-ghani was, in the weeks immediately prior to his death, being given his medications (diazepam and levetiracetam) for a seizure disorder related to perinatal hypoxic



Diff case 8/30/18

- could decomp amine crossreact  $\bar{c}$  caffeine
  - SS says GEMS is very specific
  - BW wouldn't expect cross reaction
  - many dietary sources of caffeine
  - IP sees not infrequently in young kids

- Any observed symptoms in journal

- obtain  
up  
plans
- more recent MR? → EB/JT → <sup>institutions</sup> from imaging
  - response from Bill Anderson? — Rx records
  - report from Mady
  - write snuff for case conference. everybody shares
    - other documentation in journal
    - write Mady.
  - Dayepam in AMP?

- Lorcetivacetam — renal ~~not~~ excreted unchanged, small volume of distribution, probably doesn't accumulate in liver.
  - consider testing kidney tissue

- at this point undet/undet

→ Keppra is not found in the liver  
postmortem → see reference.

- does dad know meds are required?? is  
he involved in kids care prior to  
abduction? as kidnapper, he assumes  
caregiver role?

- calling it nat doesn't stop prosecution



CONFIDENTIAL

Workorder 18231798

Chain 99260

Patient ID

Page 2 of 4

**Detailed Findings:**

Analysis and Comments	Result	Units	Rpt. Limit	Specimen Source	Analysis By
Beta-Phenethylamine	Positive	ng/g	5000	002 - Liver Tissue	GC/MS
Caffeine	Positive	mcg/g	0.40	002 - Liver Tissue	GC/MS

Other than the above findings, examination of the specimen(s) submitted did not reveal any positive findings of toxicological significance by procedures outlined in the accompanying Analysis Summary.

**Reference Comments:**

## 1. Beta-Phenethylamine (PEA) - Liver Tissue:

Beta-Phenethylamine is a decomposition product. The reported qualitative result for this substance was based upon a single analysis only. If confirmation testing is required please contact the laboratory.

## 2. Caffeine (No-Doz) - Liver Tissue:

Caffeine is a xanthine-derived central nervous system stimulant. It also produces diuresis and cardiac and respiratory stimulation. It can be readily found in such items as coffee, tea, soft drinks and chocolate. The reported qualitative result for this substance is indicative of a finding commonly seen following typical use and is usually not toxicologically significant. If confirmation testing is required please contact the laboratory.

**Sample Comments:**

001 Physician/Pathologist Name: Hannah Kastenbaum, MD

001 Tissue specimen required homogenization: 18231798-001

002 NMS Labs generated homogenized Tissue sample: 18231798-002

002 Due to the nature of this specimen, some analytes may not be detected by GCMS Qualitative analysis.

Chain of custody documentation has been maintained for the analyses performed by NMS Labs.

Unless alternate arrangements are made by you, the remainder of the submitted specimens will be discarded six (6) weeks from the date of this report; and generated data will be discarded five (5) years from the date the analyses were performed.

Workorder 18231798 was electronically signed on 10/05/2018 14:34 by:

Daniel S. Isenschmid, Ph.D., F-ABFT  
Forensic Toxicologist

**Analysis Summary and Reporting Limits:**

All of the following tests were performed for this case. For each test, the compounds listed were included in the scope. The Reporting Limit listed for each compound represents the lowest concentration of the compound that will be reported as being positive. If the compound is listed as None Detected, it is not present above the Reporting Limit. Please refer to the Positive Findings section of the report for those compounds that were identified as being present.

Acodc 50013T1 - Cannabinoids Confirmation, Tissue - Liver Tissue

-Analysis by High Performance Liquid Chromatography/ Tandem Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) for:

Compound	Rpt. Limit	Compound	Rpt. Limit
11-Hydroxy Delta-9 THC	4.0 ng/g	Delta-9 THC	N/A
Delta-9 Carboxy THC	N/A		